



SPEECH

BY THE HON.

EDWARD BLAKE, Q.C., M.P.

Ex-Premier of Ontario,
Canada,

IN CONNECTION WITH THE

FROME DIVISION LIBERAL ASSOCIATION,

And in supporting a Resolution of Confidence in

Mr. Gladstone's Government,

AT THE

❖ GUILDHALL, BATH, ❖

JANUARY 27TH. 1893.



REPRINTED FROM THE
Bath and County Weekly News.



1893

B5

The Irish Question.

IRELAND'S DEMANDS CLEARLY STATED.

The following is a reprint, from the *Bath and County Weekly News* of the 28th January, of the speech delivered on the preceding night in the Guildhall, Bath, by the Hon. E. Blake, Q.C., M.P. for South Longford:—

Mr. BLAKE, M.P. who had a most enthusiastic reception (the audience cheering upstanding), supported a hearty resolution of complete confidence in the Government. He said: Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen. You are doubtless well aware that the party to which I belong (the Irish Nationalist party), is not one of the sections into which unhappily the Liberal party is more or less divided, is not any part of the Liberal party, but is and has been recognised by your great leader, to be properly an independent party, acting and co-operating together for the accomplishment of one single paramount national purpose, the attainment of Home Rule for the country which we represent. (Applause). How comes it then that I appear before you to-night at a meeting of Liberals, to support as I do, from the bottom of my heart, this resolution of confidence in a Liberal government? (Applause.) It comes because the Independent Irish Nationalist party (of which I am an humble member), is engaged, and has for years been engaged, by a bond of honourable alliance with the Liberal party, formed in 1886, and pursued in circumstances of considerable difficulty, and much sacrifice, by both the Liberal party and the Irish Nationalist party—faithfully pursued ever since engaged in bonds, I say, of honourable alliance and co-operation for the accomplishment of this great constitutional reform, so vital and important as it is to both countries and to the Empire at large. (Applause.) It is because the Irish Nationalist party has seen no reason at all to distrust, but has seen great reason to give increased credit to the honour and good faith and the firm persistence of the Liberal party, in the

performance of its part of the compact. So long as faith and pledge is kept with the Irish Nationalist party that party is ready to take risks, encounter dangers—and it has to encounter attacks on the flank, to which it is unhappily exposed—in order to assure and re-assure the members of the Liberal party throughout Britain that if it keeps faith with us we will honourably and truly keep faith with them. (Applause.) It is because we see in the professions—and in what is infinitely more important than professions, in the practice of your leaders and of the Government of the day evidences of their continued fidelity to the cause in which we are concerned,—(Applause)—and we believe that to strengthen their hands at this time is the most important step we can take in furtherance of the object dearest to our hearts. (Applause.) Now I have somewhat cleared the ground on which I came here. In my own personal capacity as a citizen of the Empire, as a politician in a humble way, of a quarter of a century standing, I have always been a Liberal. (Applause.) I have been a Liberal in my own country, with a sympathy for the great Liberal party in Great Britain in all things except when they went wrong about Ireland,—(applause)—and in all things since they have acted rightly about Ireland,—(applause)—and therefore I have a personal pleasure and satisfaction in finding it consistent with my public duty to do anything that might in the slightest degree give any aid to the Liberal party in the Empire. (Applause.) Now I come here as an Irish Nationalist member, not as a Separatist. (Applause.) I have never been a Separatist. (Applause.) I come here as a Unionist—(applause)—and it is because I am a Unionist that I am a Home Ruler. (Applause.) I do not believe in a Union formed by chains. (Hear, hear.) I do not like a Union such as you sometimes see in the streets, two dogs coupled together by a chain, barking and struggling, and not pulling the same way. (Laughter). I don't believe in a Union of which the only visible signs are Acts of Parliament, parchments, seals, and forms of that kind. I believe in the much despised and derided Union of hearts and Union of interests. (Applause.) These are the only bases of union either among men or communities of men which are

worth talking about—(applause)—and if you make a union which is founded upon common interests you make a union which will be formed of contented parts, and will make a contented whole. It is in order that there may be a contented whole formed of contented parts that I am advocating not separation, not the repeal of the union, but the creation for the first time of a solid enduring union for the purpose of objects really common to us, and the separation of those interests which are really local. (Applause.) Now there are interests which are common to the two kingdoms. The succession to the crown; that must remain always one, and all questions concerning it must be disposed of by a common and imperial Parliament. Foreign relations; whatever local divisions or private concerns we have, before the world we must stand one and indivisible (applause) with a common foreign policy for peace or war. (Hear, hear.) We have a common interest in the great colonies of the empire. (Hear hear.) I was told the other day, I am sorry to say by a chairman in his address that he looked upon me as an exotic. (Laughter.) I said that the only thing exotic about me, Mr. Chairman, is the flower in my button hole, which I got from your conservatory. (Laughter.) I am not an exotic: I am British born. (Applause.) I am at home in every quarter, where a patch of red is to be found on the map, in so many quarters of the world; but I am at home most of all in the old house at home—that is in the United Kingdom. (Loud applause.) We have common concerns then with reference to the colonies, we have common concerns with reference to the great Indian Empire. More, our trade, our commerce, is from the nature of things, from the geographical relations of the two countries, from their union by the sea, which is the great free trader of the world, from a long association in a beneficial course of trade, from the established trade relations between Great Britain and Ireland—a common concern—it is manifestly to the interest of Great Britain and still more manifestly to the interest of Ireland that the relations of trade which prevail in the United Kingdom should be one and indivisible. These are common concerns, and not only in my judgement, but according to our practice on our side of the Atlantic both in the Re-

public and the Dominion there should be a common regulation of the duties, customs and excise, without which it would be impossible to ensure absolute unity and freedom of trade between the two countries. In all these respects and some others an agreement should be come to for continued direct control if the Union is to become real, and if those things which have made friction and difficulty between the two countries are made to disappear, you will have then for the first time a deliberate discussion in the common parliament of the two countries on what are common concerns. What follows? That in the Imperial Parliament only on those matters of common concern to both countries would the Irish members have votes. In my own parliament at the crisis in 1886, when the Home Rule Bill of that year was in debate in the English House, I moved a resolution expressive of the opinion of the Canadian House in favour of the principle of that Bill. But I moved only in favour of the principle. I expressly declared that I limited my motion to the principle, because amongst other points I was unable to agree with that portion of the measure which excluded Ireland from representation in the Imperial Parliament. I felt that it would not be final. I felt that it was degrading to Ireland to suppose that she would long remain contented, that you were to administer her affairs—or rather the common affairs over her—without any voice of her own in their management. I felt that the more thorough was the success of the Home Rule you gave her, rising to the dignity and stature which belongs to her, the more she would demand a share of control in those affairs and that she would be likely under such circumstances to say, Well, you sent us out of Westminster, and we will not return; we have proved ourselves capable of managing these things which you have allowed to us, and we are quite able to manage our own affairs completely. (Hear, hear.) I felt there was a danger, a possibility of this, and that there were ways by no means impossible whereby the representation of Ireland could be secured in the Imperial parliament at once without the breaks and inequalities which would be involved in their exclusion. (Hear, hear.) To what extent should Ireland be re-

presented? Just so long as Great Britain chooses to maintain the iniquitous Act of Union I should protest most strongly against the gross injustice of reducing by a single man the representation which the act of union gives to Ireland in the present House of Commons. These are our weapons within the constitution to assert our rights. Until there is a settlement between the two countries we decline to give up one man of our forces. And you must remember, your sense of justice will not permit you to forget that for many a long year after the act of union, our population increased far more proportionately than yours, that it is we were grossly under represented, and that largely owing to the difficulties which have been created in Ireland by the unhappy incompetence, or want of knowledge of the English Parliament to remedy our grievances that the population has been dwindling year by year, you never offered while we were entitled to more members to give us more, and I am sure you would not say that we should be justified in giving up a single man until settlement is come to between the two countries. According to the modern doctrine of representation, as my friend has said, it is not land or houses, it is souls that are represented. (Applause). Therefore I am quite prepared for my part so soon as the settlement is reached to agree to a reduction of the representation in Ireland to a just proportion according to the population, and it will be to a trifle over 80 instead of 103. (Hear, hear). For what subjects is Ireland to be represented? It would be the grossest impudence on the part of any Irishman to claim a right to vote on your concerns. (Hear, hear). Of course if you ask them to vote upon your affairs they will meet your wishes. (Hear, hear.) But they make no such claim. They claim that right to vote when common concerns are to be dealt with; they claim no right whatever to vote when your local concerns are dealt with. (Hear, hear.) Now what control shall this Imperial parliament have over Ireland in managing her own concerns? You remember the attitude, or the attitudes, for there was a series, that the Liberal Unionist party from time to time took on the subject of Home Rule. You will remember a few years ago on the initiation of the great

struggle, there was a time when Mr. Chamberlain (hisses) was very close indeed to Mr. Gladstone. (Loud applause.) There was a time—if it served any useful purpose (but I won't take up your time), I could read extracts from his speeches which would prove that he was prepared to grant a large measure of Home Rule to Ireland. (Laughter.) But he always more or less, and then perhaps rather less than more (laughter) and now rather more than less (laughter) insisted upon an element which would be fatal to the success of the plan, an element of constant supervision and overlooking, of grandfatherly and grandmotherly superintendence (laughter) over the conduct of Irish affairs. I was telling a meeting at Huddersfield the other night a story which a little reminded me of the attitude of these gentlemen when they were saying rather sympathetic words to fair Erin upon this subject—courting her a little, but with the reservations to which I have alluded. Just before I came across here an action for breach of promise was tried in my own country. It was brought in a way in which such actions are very seldom brought—by the gentleman against the lady. (Laughter.) He was a schoolmaster, who had been wooing the fair lady, and there was as usual a correspondence which was produced upon the trial. The lady, in the course of the correspondence, broke into poetry; it was not original poetry; she cut it out of a newspaper and sent it to her lover, and if I rightly recollect, the verses ran this way:—

And will you ever love me?

And ever be my dear?

And will you never chide me?

Nor never be a bear?

(loud laughter). To this the lover with imprudent frankness responded by writing on the margin of the paper and returning it, somewhat in the manner of Mr. Chamberlain towards Ireland—"I will sometimes if you need it; 'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth'" (renewed and prolonged laughter). Well, Mr. Chairman, the lady broke off the engagement, and, strange to say, the jury found that she was entitled to do it, and they would not give the gentleman any damages. (Laughter). So, I may say, we decline to agree to the terms of the engagement proposed by Mr. Chamber-

lain, by which he is to exhibit his love to us by his corrections (cheers and laughter). No ; we recognize that amongst the functions of this common and imperial Parliament which are to continue, amongst the functions of which it cannot divest itself even if it would, is that of supremacy ; That it is a supreme Parliament, that it has the power of repealing or amending this Act or any other Act, that it has the power, after the passage of this Act, of making laws about Ireland, and that the Executive may, subject to its responsibility to this common Parliament, be given some power in connection with and theoretically affecting all legislation. And we say that these are real powers ; they are existent ; they are not merely nominal. But we say that Home Rule would be worse than a lie if they were to be retained upon any such understanding as that they were not powers reserved for use in some great and serious emergency, in cases in which, presumably, the Irish legislature might commit a grave abuse of the powers entrusted to it and do detriment to the general interests of the Kingdom. (Cheers.) You know that there are many powers in the British Constitution which if pushed to extremes or put into common use, would be destructive of the whole. So of this power, it is a sword which will remain, I believe, sheathed for ever, but it is a sword which you can draw upon some great emergency, which alone would justify your using the weapon. Normally, ordinarily, we must be free to legislate for Ireland in those particulars in which you give us control of her local affairs according to our own views, even although they differ from yours. What would be the use of setting up a sham House there to make just such laws as you decided were good for us ? It is because you have proved, and it is no disparagement to say it, since the reason of it lies deep in the roots of human nature, the idiosyncracies of individual men and different nations, you have proved what any nation would prove under the circumstances—your own incompetency to master, your want of time to master, your incapacity to deal with the local affairs of another nation and another country, that we demand a Parliament for them ourselves. And just as we would fail to appreciate many of your idiosyncracies, and fail to sympathise with many of your

views, and just as you would think it unreasonable that that circumstance should prevent your views having effect with reference to your own concerns, just as you would think about such interference on our part with you, so, extraordinary as you may think it, do we think about your interference with us. (Cheers.) Now there is a reason why England, as distinguished from Wales and Scotland why this division of Britain should have been somewhat slower to apprehend the justice of this demand of ours—a reason also founded deep in human nature. Wales sympathises with us by 28 to 2, Scotland sympathises with us by something about two to one, in England there is a majority against us of about 70. But it would be entirely a mistake to look at the representation in the House as evidence of the feeling of the people in either of the three divisions. Your system of producing, or attempting to produce, in the House of Commons a mirror, a reflection, of the public opinion of the people is an imperfect, a hap-hazard system, and the more you extend the franchise, the more you give power to the people to vote, the larger the number of those who do vote, the more obvious does it become that we have got to look a little behind the returns which that imperfect system produces if we want to see what popular opinion is. Now at the last election there were in England — not Scotland, not Wales — in England about 3,300,000 polled votes, and there was only about 70,000 majority out of that number in favour of the anti-Home Rulers. You are aware that out of 3,300,000, 70,000 hardly counts; you were nearly equally divided; and if you go on counting you will find that it accounts for only ten members instead of 70 or 72, so that the strength of public opinion against Home Rule in England, the majority, is multiplied by seven in the returns—sevenfold, seventy men representing a popular strength of ten only. Taking Britain as a whole, you have I think something like a majority of 13 against Home Rule in the House, but on the polled votes there is actually a majority in Britain of 16,000 men in favour of Home Rule; and over the whole of the United Kingdom there is a polled majority of 245,000 in favour of Home Rule. (Cheers.) But Unionists, those who are always declaiming about

the sacredness of the union, and who will not agree for an instant to consider the propriety, I do not say of repealing but of modifying the union so as to give some local control of local affairs to one of the divisions, the Unionists take no account of the United Kingdom when they talk of the result of the elections. They cut it up in advance before the Home Rule Bill is passed. While they are protesting that they will peril their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honours (loud laughter) in perpetual defence of the condition of things as they are, they cut the Kingdom up into divisions. They cut off Ireland, they take away Wales, they take away Scotland, and they take old England by itself; they say there is an overwhelming majority of seventy—which, as I have shown, ought to be only ten—in England against Home Rule, and they that will not count Ireland, that they do not attach much importance to Wales, that Scotland is not of much account; and because England by itself has so decided it is impossible that the measure can be carried. (Laughter and cheers.) Well, now I want no repeal of the Union; but this is my contention, that I really must insist that while the Kingdom is united we should talk of the United Kingdom, while the Parliament is one we should deal with its majority as a whole. There is, as I have said, a majority in the Kingdom of 245,000, and in the House there is—or there was in the last session, for now there are about eight vacant seats—a majority of 40. That the majority is found in one part of the kingdom or another part of the kingdom has, I will not say nothing, but has not all to do with the matter. My own opinion is that it has something to do with the matter. If the Liberal Unionists had been able to say that there was a majority in Ireland against Home Rule, they would have said that no matter how large a majority there was in England, Scotland and Wales for it, that the majority against it in Ireland was absolutely fatal to the idea. (Cheers and laughter). I know they would, because they succeeded in getting a seat or two in Ireland, by reason of some divisions and other circumstances, and they boast of the seat or two they got in Ireland as most important circumstances. They attach great importance, peculiar,

and special importance, to the voice of Ireland if only it say "No" (loud laughter), but if Ireland says "Yes," it might as well be a dumb dog. (Renewed laughter.) Well now, let us look again; why should it be that of these four divisions of the United Kingdom, England should naturally be slowest to recognize the propriety of the change? Well, there are two reasons. First, England is the most Tory of the four divisions, the most Conservative, and therefore the most averse to change. But there is another reason, lying deep down, once again at the roots of human nature. It is because you have got Home Rule in England yourselves at present; you do not appear to suffer under the grievances and difficulties which Ireland, and measureably and considerably Wales and Scotland do. You have got 470 votes out of 670 votes in the common parliament; you can pass any local law you please, no matter if every man from Ireland, Wales, and Scotland in parliament shall vote against it; you control your own affairs just now and ours too; and therefore you are not quite so alive to the importance of the thing. No man knows so well how the shoe pinches as the man that is wearing it, you know (laughter and cheers), and you are not wearing the shoe. But do not suppose that although you have this power if you choose to exercise it, you are not really and deeply interested in the change. You are. Although you have got the voting power to pass any law you please for your own concerns, yet you know that the legislation you wish is delayed and often denied; you know that proper attention to your concerns cannot be given. Well; it is your own fault; it is because you keep on interesting yourselves in and managing other peoples' affairs as well as your own (laughter and cheers); it is because you do not choose to divest yourselves of those things which do not belong to you and attend to those which do. Then what should Ireland have control of? She should have control of her local Irish matters, civil rights within Ireland, her municipal legislation, questions relating to land; there is nothing more local in the world than the land. (Hear, hear). You recollect, I daresay, the story of a great territorial magnate, he was a duke or one of those dignitaries; a good many years ago he was

much offended—I do not know why, probably because his tenants did not give him a triumphal procession, or something of the sort, when he came home. At any rate he made the announcement that he would leave the estate and not return, but a steady, hard-headed old tenant said, “Pray will his grace take his land with him?” (Laughter). That solves the question, they cannot take the land with them, the land is in Ireland, the land is Ireland, and therefore we must deal with the land. Now that is a large order, but fortunately it is an order which has been greatly facilitated, about which the lines of settlement have been very clearly developed by the legislation and action that has taken place during the last few years. The principle that the Irish Tenant’s position was absolutely intolerable, was contrary to the laws of God, that it was a disgrace to man and should have been made contrary to man’s laws long ago, was long ago recognised, and a strenuous effort was made to modify the position by creating what was called the dual ownership, the recognition of the tenant’s moral and equitable right in his improvements, and by creating a tribunal to fix the rents. The scheme was bold and it did some, even great good, but it is recognised by all that it did not solve the question, and the solution of the question, it is admitted now, is to be found on other lines—namely, on the lines of the conversion of the occupying tenants of the great bulk of the small holdings of Ireland into proprietors of the soil. There is no dispute about that now; Liberal Unionist, Tory, Radical, and Nationalist are all agreed that this is the method of solving the difficulty. How is it to be solved? There also the lines have been made pretty clear to us; the credit of the state has been granted to a certain extent; the arrangement whereby there shall be a tribunal for determining the arrangements for purchasing with provisions for the tenant who is to pay, paying the state which guarantees the landlord his price, a fixed sum every year for a period ordinarily about 49 years. There is the principle of action laid down, and under various legislation which has taken place, 50,000 men have become the incipient proprietors of their holdings. But that is but a drop in the bucket: much more remains to be done. The Imperial credit, which has been granted,

remains an element which is confessedly important to the completion of the operation—the British taxpayer does not want to agree to a pledge of further Imperial credit for Irish land. Ireland does not ask the British taxpayer to pledge further Imperial credit beyond what is now pledged by three acts, the first Ashbourne Act, the successor to that act, and the late Balfour act, for that purpose. But do you suppose that if we, the Irish legislature, on the credit of the Irish people, pledge its resources for the large sum necessary to complete the alteration of the bulk of the small holders, into proprietors, if we are to do all that, and take all these risks, that we are going to agree that you shall devise the means and methods and appoint the officers and arrange the whole affair—that we shall pay and you shall spend? (Laughter.) No. (Cheers.) You would not agree to do it in your own case No, and the whole of these questions can be solved by simply putting yourselves in our place, everyone of them can be solved if you would only ask yourselves “what would we do in like case.” Therefore I say we must and shall have the right to deal with the question of the land. Now I am no more a confiscator than I am a separatist; but I believe in the general principles of settling the Irish land question which have already been laid down with this condition, which I may tell you Ulster perhaps more than any other province concurs with one voice in demanding that for its settlement there is required the power of compulsory purchase by a state authority. (Hear, hear) I do not believe that power would be frequently used: I believe its existence would save the necessity of its frequent use, but that it must be obtained is to my mind obvious. In principle it has been obtained already, when you passed the Improvement Act, fixing the rents that a landlord could receive for his land, you practically adopted the same principle of compulsion. What is land worth? It is worth what you can get for it. Yet you decide that it shall pay what a commissioner says it is worth. You have done it with reference to Labourers’ Allotments, where you have given by a cumbrous machinery—which is absurd and ridiculous, but still the principle is there—you have given the power of taking land in order that labourers may have allotments. (Hear, hear.) So in Scotland with the Crofters, who represent the same condition, almost critically and exactly, as the congested districts of Ireland—the most distressed part of Ireland—you have established the principle of compulsory purchase in order to relieve the Crofters there; and Ireland, which

is supposed to expend all your time and to be in advance of all other demands, yet lacks the power of compulsory purchase in these districts, whose lot is beyond question the hardest lot in the world to-day. So that there is nothing dangerous that I can see in these proposals, and my own belief is that, granted a judicious use of the present pledged Imperial credit, with the notion and knowledge that when its use terminates measures will be taken to settle the question with reference to the bulk of the small holdings involving compulsory purchase, the whole Irish question will be settled with greater ease than most people imagine, and with great advantage to the landlords as well as the tenants. (Applause.) Well, they agree, some of them, that we shall have power to make laws on many things, but they say we cannot allow you to appoint the judges and we cannot allow you to appoint the police; (Laughter.)—the Imperial Government and Executive must appoint the judges and police. That seems to me very farcical. Give a country the power to make any law it pleases upon a certain subject; it can amend the law, it can repeal the law, it can re-enact the law, and it can change the law to its liking—all right—but refuse it the power to appoint the officers who are to interpret the laws it makes. Did you ever hear such a thing? The greater includes the less. If we are to make laws to suit ourselves surely we are to be entrusted to find the men who are to interpret the meaning of our laws, and to carry them out. The Irish Legislature must have power to deal with the criminal law as well as the civil law. Even civil laws for their proper administration require quasi-penal sanction, and they are in effect almost inextricably mixed up. The special conditions which have excited the suggestion that she should not have power to make criminal laws relate to the topic I have been discussing—the land. Apart from the land, and apart from what is called agrarian outrage, the condition of Ireland as to crime compares favourably with your own, and I believe with any country in the world. (Applause.) We all agree that—although I do not stand here to palliate or excuse crime or outrage—the condition of Irish land was intolerable, and that it did give rise to—though it may not excuse—the agrarian crime which we regret. We all agree that this condition has to be changed, and I have just discussed the lines of its solution. When it is changed Ireland will become normal as to crime, or if abnormal, abnormal only because she has less crime than other countries; and what reason can there be for her own legislature not

dealing with the question of crime? Then as to education. You have your opinions; I don't believe you all agree about education (laughter). Some of you are for School Boards, some for the church schools, and so on and so on, some for conscience clauses, and some for secular education, and more every-day education—I am not speaking of this audience, but of England as a whole. Settle it as you please; we have nothing to do with the education of your children, and we don't want to meddle, to interfere with it. But leave us to settle ours. Let us arrange it according to our own views. Next to the question of the land the question of Education is the most local, and comes closest to the hearts of the people. But I quite agree that past conditions of excitement, of quarrel, of frantic suspicion and despairing exclamations of anxiety may justify what I myself don't believe are necessary at all, certain restrictions upon this subject of education and upon the cognate subject with which it is mixed up, of religion. I tell you I don't think they are necessary—shall I tell you why? It is not always pleasant to an English audience to know why, but we had better speak the truth. (Hear, hear.) For many long generations the great majority of the Irish people were ground down under the heel of a minority. (Hear, hear.) They saw the State Church, established by the State, endowed by the State with enormous endowments out of proportion to all possible good they could do, and still more out of proportion to all the good they did (applause), endowed in addition with tithes levied off the lands of the poor peasants who could barely keep life and souls together, and who were contributing out of their poverty to the support of the alien church, while they were obliged out of their poverty to support their own. For long years they struggled against that condition, and against conditions which debarred them from education, from the performance of the rites of their religion, and produced many other infamous disabilities; and what did they struggle for? Ascendancy? Domination? The triumph of the majority over the minority, to be substituted for the triumph of the minority over the majority? No. They asked for equal freedom, for religious equality. They asked you to recognize the great principle that a man's religion is a thing between the individual man's conscience and his Maker. (Loud Applause.) And they asked no more. (Cheers.) And you so ground into the hearts and souls and brains of the Irish people by the course which you pursued in the bad days of old of which you have long since repented,

these good doctrines of religious equality and of freedom of conscience that I do not believe you need impress them further, if without a single restraint you were to say Ireland shall settle the question of religion, Ireland shall settle the question of education. (Applause.) Notwithstanding that, as a practical man, I believe in making as easy as possible the passage of a great measure, in soothing all apprehensions that can be soothed, even though I don't share them; and I believe in something more. It has been said by some gentlemen who are Nationalists in Ireland that it is humiliating to Ireland to have restrictions imposed. I say no. (Hear, hear). I rejoice that when the United Parliament is framing a written constitution, when it is declaring what the principles of Government shall be for one of the communities which compose the United Kingdom it should lay down the great and fundamental principles of civil and religious liberty. (Hear, hear.) It is a possession for the world; it is a great thing for humanity, and I will even venture to hope that some day or other, not far removed, you may be far enough advanced to apply to yourselves these doctrines. (Loud applause.) Therefore for my part I approve of every word and line of those provisions of the Bill of 1886, which declares that the Irish legislature shall not make any law (1) Respecting the establishment or endowment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or (2) Imposing any disability or conferring any privilege on account of religious belief, or (3) Abrogating or derogating from the right to establish or maintain any place of denominational education or any denominational institution or charity, or (4) Prejudicially affecting the right of any child to attend a school receiving public money without attending the religious instruction at such school. You lay all these down for us and we accept them heartily. Some day or other you will be wise enough and liberal enough to enact them for yourselves. (Loud applause). We agree also to the establishment of a tribunal which shall at the instance of the executive decide finally with reference to any law that the Irish Legislature may pass, and which the Executive may challenge, whether it is within those powers. To you this question of limited powers is a novel one. To us who live away on one side or other of the line which divides the great North American Continent it is a common one, because we live in a country of limited powers. But you will understand that while the government of this country is sovereign and omnipotent, can pass any law it pleases, can unmarry any of you, can take away the property of any of you, do anything

except turn a man into a woman, or a woman into a man (laughter), the government of limited powers, the legislature whose powers extend only so far, if it tries to go further, going beyond its powers, its act is inefficacious, it is void, it is waste paper, it is invalid. I authorise you as my attorney to sell my property called Greenholme; I have another property called Yellowtrees, and you proceed to sell it. Why of course your act is void; I allowed you to sell Greenholme; you sold Yellowtrees. So it is waste paper. If you authorise the legislature to legislate about one thing and it proceeds to legislate about another, that act is void. Yet anxieties or heats may arise as to whether it was going beyond its powers or not: therefore there is a wise and wholesome provision referring it, speedily and expeditiously to a tribunal to determine as to whether it is within or without, and so the minds of all people are set at rest, and it is either within or without the power, as established by the higher court. You must give us the great blessing and liberty of taxing ourselves. (Laughter.) You have enjoyed largely that luxury for a long time. You must hand it over to us, and we will promise to use it as little as we can. (Laughter.) Revenue. We must contribute to Imperial expenditure; we are bound to contribute our proper proportionate share of those common concerns which are to be disposed of in the Imperial Parliament, but it is conceded on all hands that the principle of contribution proposed in the Bill of 1886 was unjust to Ireland. The country is a very poor country, and the masses of the people have not a surplus out of which to pay large taxes, because they are ground down by poverty. It is a country of small accumulations; it is a country whose industry is almost entirely the agricultural industry, and you have heard, I dare say, from some neighbouring farmer that that industry is not exactly prospering just now. It is a country of dwindling population, whose occupants are all to be engaged as we have all agreed in the task of buying the land on which they live, and on terms which will oblige them to pay considerable sums for fifty years, and though each year makes them more and more proprietors, no year diminishes the sum they have to pay until they are free; and so their capacity to pay is limited. (Hear, hear.) It is a country to which gross injustice has been done in times that are past with reference to the debt and to the expenditure. It is a country which claims that your system of government which involved a system for keeping down the people, is an extravagant system. Again as everyone of you that keeps a house knows it is much easier to raise the expenditure £100

a year than it is to cut it down. Economies can be made only slowly, and revenues have to be made adequate at once. I therefore appeal to the sense of honour and justice, as well as to the sense of liberality and generosity of the British people with reference to the financial terms of the scheme that they give Ireland a fair chance (applause), that they do not expect exorbitant terms from her as to her contribution to the Imperial expenditure, knowing as they do what her wealth has been and what her taxation has been. For it is known that relatively to her tax-paying power she has been taxed a great deal too heavily. Notwithstanding that taxation, your system has been such that you have reaped very little net benefit from Ireland up to to-day. If you reap as little in the future as in the past, you are no worse off with reference to Imperial taxation, but you are very much better, in connection with every other thing, and be sure the advantages to be reaped will secure prosperity for Ireland and consequently for England as well. I say to you then that we want nothing but this, that Ireland shall control Irish affairs, that Great Britain shall control the affairs of Great Britain, and that Great Britain and Ireland in the great and supreme Imperial Parliament shall continue to control the common affairs of the two countries. (Applause.) I admit there are difficulties in the way; I admit that hair splitters may find something to cavil at in every line and word of a great constitutional settlement like this. I am a lawyer myself, but I devoutly thank God that the great jury that is to dispose of this question is not composed of lawyers. (Applause and laughter.) They will take very little account of these hair splitting cavillings, of these far-fetched theories, of the solution of this question the great doctrine that it these imaginations and suspicions. They will apply to is impossible to provide against all conjectures, and phantoms of the imagination, and that with good will and an earnest desire on the part of both parties to carry the matter to a prosperous conclusion they are of no consequence whatever,—(cheers)—that the true concern and salvation of peoples, the true methods of achieving a constitutional settlement are by reaching foundations of justice and fair play, of common interest and consent, and that then all other things will settle themselves, and therefore you will not ask for complete logical accuracy, particularly when some of the gravest defects are due to the fact that some of the other divisions of the country are not yet prepared to accept what I have no doubt in a few years you will be disposed to accept, a further extension of Home Rule to

the other divisions; you will not insist upon complete logical precision and reform in a matter we are bound to present before you somewhat imperfectly, just because it is not ripe for similar action in the other parts of the kingdom. (Applause.) There are great difficulties—tactical difficulties. We have a small majority, a composite majority. The Duke of Devonshire and Mr. Chamberlain say we have not the right to propose a measure with such a majority, it is true we turned the others out, but we had no right to go in. And Sir Henry James, if he is rightly reported in a condensed report of his statement which I have seen, says they are going to oppose every line and letter of the Home Rule bill. We are to be met with virulent opposition, the sort of opposition toryism used to give to liberalism, accentuated by liberal unionism (Hear, hear). The three leaders of the Liberal Unionists, the Duke of Devonshire, Mr. Chamberlain, and Sir Henry James, flinging the banner of defiance out just before the opening of the session of Parliament. But what have we to depend on in this democratic age of the United Kingdom? Upon the continued and sustained expression of the confident hope of the people that the Government will be thorough and will be bold. (Prolonged cheers.) Remember that your duty is not ended, as it did not begin, with the late election, that you have got a grand duty to perform every day and every hour during this year, and show unmistakably when this measure comes forward if you approve of it that you do approve of it; show unmistakably that this Government if it merits your confidence, does do so. I do not despair; I am even not desponding; but I should despair, at any rate I should despond if I did not think that the people would fully realize that duty, and would manifest unmistakably in public meeting and otherwise their lively interest and approbation of the measures which are to come forward. There can be no doubt that within the last few years the Liberal party has lost much. It has lost riches, it has lost nobility, it has lost class and privilege to a large extent, though with honourable exceptions whom you will value all the more I am sure from their rarity, and from the difficulties under which they feel themselves, separated as they are from those with whom under other circumstances they would have been glad to act. (Cheers.) But although you have made these losses, these losses may turn out your gain. There are very few goods in this world of ours that are unmixed goods; and you may depend upon it that however much a great many of these ornamental appendages of the Liberal party added to your respectability and to

your stability, they were rather a drag upon Liberal and Radical legislation. (Loud applause.) Now, how are you going to make up for it? The way is easy; the way is this. I will give it to you by an example. I suppose there are none of you old enough to remember, but most of you have read about the great Reform Bill of 1832. When that Reform Bill was introduced the Tories said it was madness, it was insanity, it never could pass at all. But you know what happened; it did pass. But to what did it owe its success; to what did the Government owe its triumph? To its boldness. It frightened the classes, but it seized hold of the masses. They lost the few; they gained a nation. And that at a time when the franchise was so restricted that it was the feeling of those who had not a vote that influenced those who had. But now that the men have a vote, it is not merely their moral influence—they have the voting power, and if democratic Britain say so, I say, if this government is faithful to its principles, it has before it a sterling, brilliant, honourable and useful career. (Applause.) There are two conditions upon which for my part, as far as I can see, its success depends, and though I am not authorized to speak for its leaders—I am here only a humble member of a party—yet I believe I express their convictions when I say there are but two conditions which we expect as the price of our earnest and strenuous support of the programme of the Liberal party. They are not new conditions; they are old; they are not conditions to which we ask your consent now—they are conditions to which you have already consented and the observance of which we ask. viz., that you will put a good, honest Home Rule Bill in the front, and after putting it there you will keep it there; and so doing I am sorry to say—sorry for you and sorry for the cause—there will be, I believe, very ample time to advance many other useful democratic measures. Because you know apart from our difficulty of a majority of forty in the House of Commons we have a hostile House of Lords, and that hostile House of Lords declares it is going to throw out your Bill once, and twice, and thrice, and force it before the people again. (A voice: "Let them do it.") If they do so it will take some time—a couple of sessions to test the question out, and in the meantime I see that that is going to be done which I hoped and prayed would be done from the time it was formed, that the time is not going to be wasted, that the Newcastle programme is not going to remain as a programme only (Loud and continued applause)—that the resolutions of great meet-

ings of the quintessence of the Liberalism and Radicalism of the country are going to be formulated into bills to be submitted to the Parliament and forced through the House of Commons unless the Liberal Unionists turn tail altogether and become Tories in every thing (applause) and to be sent to the House of Lords; and they may do one of two things, one negative. They may either reject altogether or mar and mutilate and emasculate, as they have been accustomed to do, Liberal legislation. Well, I hope if they do, the leader the Liberal Government will not accept any compromise which shall destroy the efficiency of the measures. (Hear, hear.) Let the House of Lords heap up wrath against the day of wrath if it will, and let the responsibility for rejection fall upon those who make a good measure a bad one. There is only one kind of measure which I could accept in any imperfect spirit of reform from them, and that is a measure affecting the franchise, and in which it would be advisable for us to accept half a loaf rather than no bread. (Hear, hear.) I believe that any electoral reform necessary to getting the opinion of the people and other Radical and democratic reforms will be pushed vigorously forward; and granted that you give us what is naturally granted, that you keep your pledge made now for six years, I believe you may count on the support in continuance of this alliance of these gentlemen as strenuously as in support of Home Rule itself (applause), and for this reason; it is interest as well as sympathy, because we feel that the chances of carrying Home Rule depend on the progress of this country, and that it is the growing strength of this Government which will enable us to overcome the opposition of the House of Lords either at the polls or now. (Cheers.) Therefore we have the deepest interest, from our own narrow point of view, in taking this course. But thank God we are not animated by that alone. (Applause.) We feel deeply indebted to the Democracy of Britain for the interest it has taken in this cause. I always relied that as soon as Britain was enfranchised it would never consent to set its heel on the democracy of the sister isle. (Applause.) Let her determine never to do that, and that the incidents of despotism shall be limited to a despotic monarchy, and shall not mark the rule of a democratic nation, and she will reap those rewards and blessings which are the due of just and generous action under circumstances of great difficulty and sacrifice, even if you are to contemplate failure, better a thousand times temporary failure occasioned by the departure of a few more weak-kneed men, by the turning up of a few more broken reeds that pierce the hand, (Laughter and applause),

—better far, I say, such a temporary failure, which gives not merely a possibility but the sure prospect of a speedy and honourable resurrection than a failure which would be due to some paltering with your pledged bond, to some paltry and ineffective measure which would not be capable of carrying out the great object you have in view, and which would result in your fall by the necessary withdrawal from the confidence of the Irish people in consequence of the abrogation of the pledge, which would leave you thrown out without the possibility, aye, and I will say the right of soon again assuming a position of power and influence. (Applause.) I have spoken too long. ("No, no.") I have spoken to you in great plainness; I make no pretence to be an orator. ("Oh.") I am a plain man, who tries to say plain things in a plain way to plain men like myself. I try to form a clear idea and conception of what the right is, and I try to explain my views as clearly as my limited capabilities will allow. That is my whole pretension to speak, and that is what I have done to-night. (Applause) I have given you my whole heart. I ask you to ponder over these things and I ask you to consider whether there is in them anything inimical to this country and to the safety and security of this Kingdom; whether they do not in fact constitute a proposal, a God-given opportunity for healing a sore centuries old, for making it, in truth, for the first time a really united Kingdom, for setting forward Ireland on a fresh career of happiness and prosperity, and with that creating a fresh career of happiness and prosperity and renewed vigour and vitality for this venerable kingdom, for this ancient Parliament, this ancient Parliament which I wish to see once again restored to its dignified and efficient conduct of its transcendent concerns, and for it is the devout wish of my heart that it may live and flourish for centuries to come. (Loud and long-continued applause).

The following resolution was then unanimously adopted :—

"That, meeting thus, on the eve of a very momentous Session of Parliament, we desire to express our unwavering confidence in the Government of Mr. Gladstone. The wise and vigorous administrative measures which have marked its commencement lead us to believe that its legislative spirit will be such as the country urgently requires. We fully rely on its thorough and determined efforts to unite countries too long divided, to secure more equitable Parliamentary representation of the people, and to place on the British Statute Book enactments more worthy of the nineteenth century and a Christian country."

Printed and Published by Southwell and Goodwin,
2, Newark Street, Bath, in the County of Somerset.

91

4936X4C

